

## Anniston: Making Chemical Weapons History

Did you know that even though it is nestled in foothills of the Appalachian mountain range in Northeast Alabama, the Calhoun County region also is playing a vital role in national and global affairs? In Anniston, the U.S. Army is making chemical weapons history at its Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. This facility will destroy a large “stockpile” of chemical weapons that have been stored in the area for many years.

### What are chemical weapons?

The weapons are sturdy containers of various types and sizes holding toxic chemical agents. Contrary to popular belief, chemical agents are not gases. Chemical agents are liquid in original form, however, they deteriorate into a thick, sludge-like substance over long periods of time.

### Where are the weapons located?

The chemical weapons are located at the Anniston Army Depot. The Army has been operating the depot at Anniston for nearly 59 years. The depot’s initial mission was defined as munitions storage. Since its inception, the depot’s mission has expanded to include the storage of munitions and the refurbishing, testing and decommissioning of combat vehicles and various types of ordnance.

### What is the Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility?

The Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility is a state-of-the-art incineration facility designed to dispose of the chemical weapons stockpile stored at the Anniston Army Depot safely and efficiently.

### How will the weapons be destroyed?

The Anniston facility will incinerate the weapons. In using this technology, robotic equipment disassembles the weapons so that each component can be treated in a separate incinerator. Specifically, the chemical agent is drained from the weapon and burned in a liquid incinerator, while the weapon’s explosive components are destroyed in a special deactivation furnace. You can learn more about



incineration in the fact sheet entitled “*Incineration: A Safe, Proven Disposal Process.*”

### Who will destroy the weapons?

The Army’s Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization is responsible for safely disposing of the stockpile. Westinghouse Anniston was awarded a contract to build, test, operate and close Anniston’s facility; it broke ground on the facility in 1997. Many other organizations work in partnership with the Army to successfully complete this mission. Among these are the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the state of Alabama and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Some of your family members, friends or neighbors probably work on this important project.

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**How long will it take to destroy the weapons?**

Construction of the chemical weapons disposal facility in Anniston began in 1997 and was completed in 2001. The facility now is preparing for disposal operations, which are expected to begin in 2002 and last approximately five years.

**How will the environment be protected?**

The permits for the facility, which the state's Department of Environmental Management approved, were written based on studies conducted locally. This ensures that operations at the disposal facility are protective of local citizens and the Anniston area environment.

**What will happen to the facility and the depot once the weapons are gone?**

Once the Army has completed the destruction of Anniston's stockpile, the disposal facility will be dismantled and decommissioned, and the Army depot will continue supporting its other mission areas.

**What is the Citizens' Advisory Commission?**

This commission, often called the CAC for short, is made up of nine members appointed by the governor of Alabama. Seven are local citizens and two are representatives of state agencies that work closely with the chemical weapons disposal program. The purpose of this organization is to provide a link between your community and the Army. The members do not make program decisions, but they are encouraged to provide guidance and recommendations. The commission provides a local perspective to the Army so that it may manage the chemical disposal program in the most positive way for your community. The Alabama CAC holds quarterly meetings, which are announced in local papers, and people on the outreach office's mailing list receive notices of upcoming meetings. The meetings are open to the public, and you are encouraged to attend. Most meetings also include time for public input and questions.

**How can I contact the CAC?**

For information on the current issues the commission is considering, or to find out the upcoming meeting schedule, please call the CAC chairperson at (256) 236-9907.

**How can I learn more?**

The Army opened the Anniston Chemical Demilitarization Community Outreach Office as a convenient "one-stop" source of information about the chemical disposal program. The office staff works closely with public affairs experts from the depot, the disposal facility and your local emergency preparedness office to ensure a comprehensive public outreach program. The outreach office has a large repository of fact sheets, brochures, exhibits and technical studies for you to peruse. Office staff frequently can be seen out in the community giving presentations, holding public meetings, distributing informational materials and attending community functions.

**How can I contact the office?**

You can reach the outreach office staff at (256) 238-0120, or via email at [annistonoro@nti.net](mailto:annistonoro@nti.net). You also are invited to visit the office at 11 East 10th Street in Anniston. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Additional office hours are available upon request.